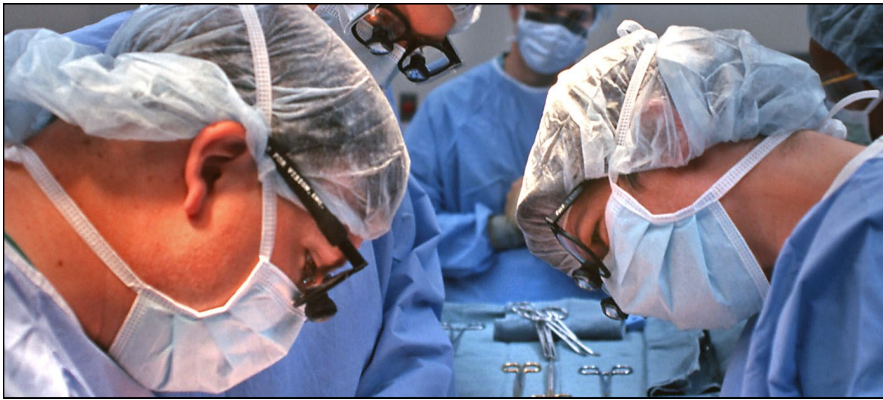


VETERANS UPDATE

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 8

AUGUST, 2020

VA SURGERY EQUAL OR BETTER VS. NON-VA



The Department of Veterans Affairs announced July 20 that VA hospitals outperform or match neighboring non-VA hospitals in surgical quality and overall patient safety satisfaction.

The finding comes from a study published June 26 in the *Journal of Surgical Research*.

"The prospect of having surgery can be stressful," said VA Secre-

tary Robert Wilkie. "For Veterans, who often have choices in where they receive care ... This study provides valuable information..."

Researchers at the White River Junction VA Medical Center in Vermont and the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in New Hampshire completed the study. They identified VA medical centers with at least one non-VA hospital

UPCOMING EVENTS

In-person events are being re-scheduled due to COVID-19.

Aug. 19, Veteran Town Hall,
5:30 - 7 p.m., phone meeting,
404-397-1596, code
1999618996#

Wednesdays in July and August
— no meeting Aug. 26 — **Women Veteran Networking Group,**
11 a.m. - 12 p.m., phone
meeting, 800-767-1750, code
36090#

within 25 miles in three regions: the West-Southwest, New England and the Deep South.

The researchers used benchmarks created by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, and scores from the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems.

SUICIDAL THOUGHTS CAN BE SUDDEN — BE READY!

Suicidal thoughts can arise quickly and seem overwhelming, but with the right tools and support, they can also go away just as quickly.

Veterans in crisis can visit a VA Emergency Department, call 1-800-273-8255 and press 1, chat online at www.VeteransCrisisLine.net or send a text message to 838255 to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Save the Veterans Crisis Line number to your contacts, in case you need it for yourself or for a Veteran in your life.

Save the number, just in case.



**Veterans
Crisis Line**
1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**

or text **838255**

VA TELEHEALTH VISITS INCREASE DURING COVID



Dr. W. Curt LaFrance Jr., a neuropsychiatrist at the Providence VA Medical Center and professor of Psychiatry and Human Behavior and Neurology at Brown University's Warren Alpert Medical School, uses the VA telehealth system at the Providence VAMC Dec. 18, 2018, to discuss a patient with Mellissa Edmunds, a licensed practical nurse and telehealth technician at the VA outpatient clinic in Alpena, Mich. (Providence VA Medical Center photo by Winfield Danielson)

The Department of Veterans Affairs recently announced that video telehealth appointments to Veterans in their homes increased more than 1,000 percent, as more Veterans chose virtual care through VA Video Connect during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In New England, VA medical centers and sites of care have conducted 87,296 VA Video Connect appointments between February and July 1. Because VA New England already had a robust telehealth infrastructure in place, the health care system was able to ramp up its telehealth capabilities to meet the increased demand.

VA Video Connect is one system that allows Veterans and their caregivers to meet virtually with their VA care teams on a computer, tablet or any mobile device with an internet connection. As in-person interactions decreased in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, VA Video Connect supported Veterans' ability to continue care while

remaining safely at home. Use of video-to-home services has been increasing since mid-March, reaching more than 29,000 nationwide appointments per day at its peak. Peak usage here in New England has resulted in more than 1,500 appointments per day.

The increase throughout the VA New England Healthcare System represents a more than 1,800 percent increase since the start of the pandemic. VA New England's telehealth encounters, overall, have nearly quadrupled in the past six months over the same period in 2019. From Oct. 1, 2018, through June 30, 2019, VA New England HCS reported 31,658 telehealth encounters, compared with 113,766 telehealth encounters from Oct. 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020, VA New England reported.

Nearing its three-year anniversary, VA Video Connect provides a seamless experience for Veterans to ensure they have access to care where and when they need it.

As of June 1, VA Video Connect experienced significant increases since the start of the pandemic at



Providence VA Medical Center

830 Chalkstone Ave
Providence, RI 02908
401-273-7100

Veteran's Crisis Line:
800-273-8255 press 1

Patient Call Center (PCC):
401-457-3336

Pharmacy Call Center:
866-400-1241

Website:
www.providence.va.gov

Facebook:
[facebook.com/
VAProvidence](https://facebook.com/VAProvidence)

Twitter:
twitter.com/VAProvidence

each of VA New England's health care systems. The VA Providence Healthcare System, for example, saw an increase of roughly 3,000 percent, representing more than 8,000 encounters.

Read more about VA telehealth services and technology at <http://www.connectedcare.va.gov/>.